

NIH TRAVEL POLICY

1500-07-00 International Travel

This chapter contains policy guidance relating to international travel by NIH employees, Commissioned Officers, Non-FTE Persons, and Invitational Travelers (excluding change of duty station); defines international travel; and describes the requirements for authorization and approval of international travel.

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A. Department (DHHS) Goals. Among the goals that international travel can and should serve are:

- 1) To fulfill regulatory or inspection obligations, such as inspection of foreign manufacturers of foods, drugs, and biological or medical devices;
- 2) Travel related to epidemics in other countries that may impact on the health of U.S. citizens;
- 3) To contribute, with the guidance of the Department of State, to U.S. foreign policy objectives;
- 4) To fulfill U.S. responsibilities as a Member Government of multilateral organizations, including the World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, UNICEF, and others; and
- 5) To participate in research and science related activities deemed of high importance to HHS.

B. Need for Special Procedures. To serve these goals, international travel is often of high priority. At the same time, it must be subject to specific procedures for justifying, approving, and monitoring beyond those regulations applied to domestic travel within the United States. International travel is often more expensive than domestic travel and entails security concerns and other sensitive issues. Travel abroad by U.S. Government employees has an aspect of

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representing the United States and the American people to other nations. International travel is especially visible and subject to both Congressional and public scrutiny.

The Special Assistant to the Secretary for International Affairs has established a system of controls for DHHS to ensure that proper and sufficient **prior notice** of all international travel to be performed will be submitted in time to secure clearance through the Office of the Secretary, the State Department, and the National Security Council, as necessary, and to provide assistance for other required activities (such as preparing embassy cables and obtaining passports and visas).

C. Delegations of Authority. The appropriate official will authorize and approve all international travel to ensure that the proposed official travel serves the goals of the Department and the NIH, and is not approved when it does not adequately serve these goals (See NIH Manual Issuance 1130 - Delegations of Authority, Travel #9).

D. Definitions.

1) International travel. The term international travel, as used in this directive, is defined to mean all travel on official duty time (except change of official duty station) outside the United States, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and any other territory under U.S. jurisdiction. Trips to the former U.S. Trust Territories in the Pacific (The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Marshall Islands) are considered international travel.

2) Sensitive countries. Travel to certain countries designated as “sensitive” by the Department of State. Countries in this category are often those with which we have foreign policy disputes or which are involved in internal political and/or social turmoil. These sites are identified by the Department of State and transmitted to the Fogarty International Center (FIC). (See www.state.gov)
Please reference OFM Transmittal No. 91A at the following web site for additional NIH procedures.

http://ofm.od.nih.gov/travel/transmittals/ofm_transmittals.htm

3) High traffic countries. Countries that receive a large volume of travelers from the U.S. placing potential burden on U.S. mission staff for services. Under certain conditions, travel clearance may be denied (See HHS Travel Manual Chapter 6-00).

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E. Object Classification Codes for International Travel. See OFM Transmittals No. 82 and 82A at the following web site address:

http://ofm.od.nih.gov/travel/transmittals/ofm_transmittals.htm

1500-07-02 Notification of Foreign Travel (NFT)

A. Requirements. A Notification of Foreign Travel (NFT) must be prepared and forwarded electronically to the FIC via the Office of Global Health Affairs (OGHA) automated system. A NFT request must be entered for all international travel by NIH personnel on official business, regardless of the source of funding for the travel. Upon receipt of the NFT, the FIC obtains the necessary Department of State cable clearances for the trip. All requests must include, 1) detailed cost data of all transportation and travel expenses projected to be incurred; 2) a detailed itinerary including any annual leave authorized; and 3) contact information including the name, address, and phone number of the in-country host and place of lodging and Embassy information (See F below).

NFT for Travel to U.S.-based International Organizations. A NFT request must be entered on-line for all travel to U.S.- based international organizations. This includes conferences/meetings that take place in the organization's headquarters or office building in e.g., Washington, DC, New York, etc. and conferences/meetings that take place elsewhere in the U.S. that are sponsored by the organization. These international organizations include but are not limited to the following: World Health Organization, Pan American Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

B. Submission Deadlines for NFT. The NFT must be received on-line by the FIC, **not later than 30 days prior to departure.** If this deadline is not met, the FIC will not have time to obtain the required clearances. Exceptions to this deadline may be made in emergencies or other cases where the travel was not anticipated. Travelers are urged to fax a copy of their Notifications to the Visa/Passport Office, FIC, as soon as they begin to make travel plans rather than waiting until IC or OD approvals are obtained. If the travel is later disapproved or canceled, the Visa/Passport office can be notified by telephone or fax.

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C. NFT for More Than One Traveler. When two or more travelers from the same IC plan to attend the same conference, meeting, or site visit, and their itineraries are identical, the names should be consolidated on one Notification.

D. Group Justification. A justification for sending more than one employee to a single foreign event must accompany the multiple-addressed NFT, if all employees are from the same lab/section/branch, etc. within the IC.

E. Amended Notifications. Minor modifications in the itinerary of an approved trip need not be submitted to FIC. However, the NFT should be amended when a city is added, the purpose of the travel is substantially altered, or the length of the trip is significantly increased.

F. Preparing the NFT. The guidance and format for the NFT are available at the following web site address:

<http://ogha.psc.gov/ogha>

All NFT requests must be entered in the automated system such that the FIC will have the following information:

- 1) Traveler: Include the name, title, IC, telephone number, employee status, (including SES or equivalent rank), and degree.
- 2) International Emergency Contacts: Include the name, address, and phone number of a contact person and the traveler's hotel in each foreign city where business will be conducted. In addition, you are to include the address and phone number for each applicable U.S. Embassy.
- 3) Itinerary: List the cities to be visited and dates. The itinerary should account for all days between departure and return and should specify time on official business and annual leave.
- 4) Purpose of Travel: Provide a concise description of the purpose of the official business to be conducted in each city. The description should contain sufficient information to be used in the cables sent by the FIC to U.S. Embassies to obtain clearance for the travel.

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5) Amount and Source of Funding: Provide the estimated total cost of the trip. Identify source of funding such as host government or organization, private sector sponsor, or the IC.

6) Trip Report: Travelers are required to enter trip report information in the automated NFT system within two weeks following their return to the United States (See HHS Travel Manual Chapter 6-00-90)

G. Notification Format. The guidance and format for the NFT are available at the following web site address:

<http://ogha.psc.gov/ogha>

1500-07-03 NIH Employees in Expert Consultations and Other Events Sponsored by Multilateral Organizations

When a multilateral organization, e.g., World Health Organization, invites a NIH official to participate in one of its events, whether such attendance is in an official business capacity or in a personal capacity, the HHS/OGHA must be informed of such representation. Thus, prior to embarking upon such travel, in order to ensure a coordinated effort, you are to contact the NIH Liaison of the OD/Office of Research Services on 301-451-4689.

1500-07-04 Personal Security Training for Long Term TDY Travel

In order to comply with new Department of State security guidelines, NIH employees and others who are authorized to conduct long term temporary duty travel, i.e., 30 days or longer, must complete a personal security training class prior to departing on travel. When the NFT is prepared, the request must indicate that the traveler has signed up for the class and will complete the training prior to travel, or has already completed said training. For additional information, contact FIC staff at 301-402-9046.

1500-07-05 Annual Plan for Participation at International Meetings

In line with HHS policy, the NIH must submit an annual plan to the OGHA that lists each international conference/meeting where the NIH anticipates attendance of **20 or more** persons. The plan is to be submitted not later than August 1 of the preceding fiscal year. Any subsequent increases in the levels of participation must be approved by the OGHA.

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1500-07-06 Annual Leave Taken in Conjunction With International Travel

It is HHS policy that NIH travelers may not be authorized in excess of **2 days** of annual leave per fiscal year in line with international travel. In addition, both days of annual leave must be taken with a single trip. Failure to take both days of leave on a single trip will result in forfeiture of the single day of leave. Exceptions may be allowed for travelers on long-term TDY in excess of 30 days.

It is HHS policy that NIH travelers may not be authorized any leave in conjunction with international trips that are sponsored in whole or in part by nonfederal sources, i.e., HHS-348 sponsored travel.

For additional information on International Travel policy, see HHS Travel Manual Chapter 6-00 at the following web site address:

<http://www.hhs.gov/of/travel/depguid.html>

1500-07-07 Passports and Visas

A. General. The Fogarty International Center (FIC), Visa/Passport Office (V/PO) has responsibility for providing visa and passport services to the NIH and other components of HHS. Copies of all forms referenced in the following sections are available at the Visa/Passport Office.

NOTE 1: Should you have questions about a H-1, J-1, or other visas and the specific immigration requirements for a Visiting Fellow or Invitational Traveler when travel requires a visa in order to enter the United States, you are to contact the NIH International Services Branch (ISB), Office of Administrative Management and International Services on 301-496-6166.

NOTE 2: Should you have questions concerning Yellow Fever Cards or immunization shots, you are to contact the NIH Occupational Medical Services (OMS), Division of Occupational Health and Safety, ORS, on 301-496-4411.

B. Definitions. A United States of America passport is a document of identity and nationality issued to U.S. citizens intending to travel or sojourn in foreign countries.

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- 1) **Official passport:** Issued to U.S. Government employees who are proceeding abroad on official government business travel.
- 2) **Regular (personal) passport:** Issued to U.S. citizens proceeding abroad for tourist and private business travel.
- 3) **Diplomatic passport:** Issued to Foreign Service Officers and to certain other officers and employees of the U.S. Government who are proceeding abroad on official business travel of a diplomatic nature.
- 4) **Visa:** An official stamp or certificate placed inside the passport by an embassy, legation, or consulate certifying that the bearer of the passport is authorized by the foreign government to travel within a designated area. The visa is valid only for the period specified by the embassy, legation, or consulate.

C. Policy. The FIC, V/PO will issue and process applications for official and diplomatic passports and visas for employees of the NIH and other HHS agencies. The FIC, V/PO will maintain control over the use of official and diplomatic passports issued to NIH and HHS employees. (For “Retention of Passport” policy, see Part D(7) below). **NOTE:** Employees conducting international travel should travel on an official passport unless the Department of State advises otherwise, e.g., security concerns. Official passports shall never be used for personal travel.

D. Procedures.

1) Official Passports. The FIC, V/PO will obtain official passports for NIH and HHS employees who are on the rolls of a U.S. Government agency and have on file a Notification of Personnel Action (SF-50), and an “Appointment Affidavits”(SF-61). Travelers must provide the following documents at least 30 days in advance of travel:

- a) Application for Passport (Form DS-11, “Application for a U.S. Passport or Registration”) completed except for signature.
- b) Two photographs taken within the last six months, measuring 2x2 inches on a light background.
- c) Proof of citizenship, such as birth certificate with an embossed seal or original naturalization papers.

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- d) Legal documentation of name change (i.e., marriage license) if name on application for passport is different from that on birth certificate or naturalization papers.
- e) Dates, destination, and purpose of travel or copy of travel order.
- f) Title and grade or Commissioned Officer level of traveler.

Travelers must submit applications in person to the V/PO. If the traveler has been issued a passport (regular, official, or diplomatic) within the last 12 years, he/she may apply for a renewal of the passport on Form DSP-82 and it is not necessary to appear in person.

2) Personal Passports. Personal passports are held by the employee and cannot be obtained through the Government at Government expense. If a Visa is required for official business travel, the Fogarty International Center will send the personal passport to the embassy for this purpose. Applications for Visas must be submitted 2-3 weeks before departure.

3) Visas. The FIC, V/PO will obtain visas for NIH and other HHS employees when required for official travel. **Travelers or those who prepare travel orders should ALWAYS contact the V/PO to determine whether a visa is required for the country to be visited and what other documents might be required by that country's embassy.** Most embassies need at least one to two weeks to process a visa.

4) Additional visa pages: If a valid passport needs additional visa pages to expand its capacity, they may be requested on Form DSP-19, "Passport Amendment/Validation Application".

5) Lost or stolen passports. The Department of State regards the loss of a passport as a serious matter. Lost or stolen passports can be, and are, used for fraudulent purposes. If a passport is lost or stolen abroad, the bearer should immediately notify the nearest American embassy or consulate. If the passport is stolen, the bearer should also report the theft to police authorities in the locale in which the theft occurred. Upon return to the United States (or if passport was lost or stolen in the United States), the bearer should notify the Visa/Passport Office, FIC. Bearer will be asked to complete Form DS-64, "Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport".

6) Replacement of lost or stolen passports. To replace a lost or stolen passport, apply in person to the FIC, V/PO with a completed Form DSP-11, two photographs, and proof of citizenship.

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7) Retention of passports. Official and diplomatic passports are the property of the U.S. Government, not the individual employee and will be kept on file with the FIC, V/PO or other designated locations, and released to travelers only upon presentation of an approved Travel Order. Upon return to the United States, the traveler must return the passport to the FIC, V/PO or other designated location. The FIC, V/PO should be informed when employment has been terminated so that official and diplomatic passports can be turned in to the Office of Passport Services, Department of State.

E. John E. Fogarty International Center Web Site. For information regarding Notifications of Foreign Travel, Passports, and Visas, refer to FIC's homepage:

<http://www.fic.nih.gov/services/visa.html>

F. Visa/Passport Requirements. For further information or guidance regarding Visas/Passports you should contact the FIC, V/PO at the following address:

Building 31, Room B2C35, MSC 2220

Telephone: 301-496-3441

Fax: 301-402-1135